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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to investigate differences in classroom teaching behavior between secondary student teachers placed in a teacher education center and student teachers in the traditional student teaching setting. Data were gathered from questionnaires to all participants and from in-situ observations of selected students using an observation instrument designed for this study. Preliminary analyses indicate no significant differences in classroom teaching behavior between the two groups although student teachers in the teacher education center had more positive attitudes toward teaching and supervision. (Author)

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TOWARD ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A TEACHER EDUCATION CENTER

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TOWARD ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A TEACHER EDUCATION CENTER

Much has been written during the past few years on the advantages of clustering student teachers in student teaching centers or in teacher education centers. The terms student teaching centers and teacher education centers are not synonymous. Student teaching center usually refers to a clustering of student teachers in a self-contained field center under the direction of a resident supervisor. The term teacher education center usually refers to a self-contained field setting in which both pre-service and in-service teachers are provided opportunities for professional development. One of the principal features of a teacher education center is the interweaving of pre-service and in-service teacher training. It is in this sense that teacher education centers go beyond the traditional notion of providing student teachers the opportunity to develop and apply the theoretical concepts and technical skills of teaching.

However, the current literature on teacher education centers focuses almost exclusively on such issues as goals, organizational structure, staffing, funding, and parity. There appear to have been few attempts at providing empirical data comparing the relative effectiveness of teacher education centers and traditional programs with respect to the preparation of competent professional educators. The purpose of this paper is to describe one tentative approach toward assessing the effectiveness of teacher education centers with respect to their impact on student teachers' attitudes toward supervision and on classroom teaching performance.

Members of the Secondary Education Department of Hofstra University and of the teaching and administrative staff of the Plainedge schools jointly established the following goals for the Hofstra University - Plainedge Teacher

Education Center (TEC.)

1. To provide pre-service teachers an opportunity to integrate theory and practice under the direction of experienced teachers.

2. To provide experienced classroom teachers workshops and conferences designed to improve classroom teaching skill as well as supervisory skills in working with student teachers.

3. To provide all participants with the opportunity to research basic issues in teaching and learning.

4. To provide all participants with an atmosphere conducive to professional growth.

Toward these ends 43 student teachers, 110 teacher assistants, and one Resident Supervisor were assigned to the two junior high schools and one senior high school comprising the TEC during the 1972 - 1973 academic year. The major differences between the TEC and the traditional pre-service program were:

1. In the TEC, one college supervisor (the Resident Supervisor) supervised all student teachers in all certification fields. In the traditional program college supervisors worked with student teachers in their own related certification fields.

2. The weekly student teaching seminar and co-requisite course on analyzing teaching behavior were taught in the TEC by the Resident Supervisor. Students in the traditional program returned to the Hofstra campus for the seminar and the course. The weekly seminar was conducted by their college supervisor but the co-requisite course was taught by instructors not otherwise connected with the student teaching experience.

3. Provision was made in the TEC for workshops and conferences not otherwise available to cooperating teachers.

In light of an earlier study by Fischer[1] it was expected that because

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[1]Stephen J. Fischer, "Student Teaching Center Project," (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ., Dec. 1966), ED 011 334.

of the in-depth experience within the field setting, the overall performance of the student teachers in the TEC would be rated higher than in the traditional center. In interviews with student teachers in a pilot Student Teacher Center, Fischer found that there was "a more positive reaction to continued and close supervision, and (except in one case) a definite feeling of growth promoted by the Resident Supervisor and cooperating teachers."[2] Given these expectations, then, it was decided to gather the following data:

1. Questionnaires to solicit perceptions of both student teachers and cooperating teachers in the TEC and traditional programs.
2. In-class observations of selected student teachers within the TEC and traditional programs.

During the Fall 1972 semester, questionnaires were distributed at mid-semester to the 14 student teachers in the TEC as well as to the 102 student teachers in the traditional program. At the conclusion of the semester, questionnaires were distributed to all cooperating teachers in both the TEC and traditional programs.

The results of the questionnaire to the student teachers at the mid-semester are summarized in Table 1. on page 11. The responses to questions 3 and 5 (B) indicate that there was considerably more frequent observation of student teachers by the college supervisor in the TEC, and that student teachers in the TEC perceived the college supervisor's assistance as helpful. These results are consistent with those obtained by Fischer, and which led

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[2] Ibid., p. 11.

him to conclude that such responses from student teachers "begin to support the conclusion that the Student Teacher Centers do provide a climate for more consistent high-quality supervision than the Ordinary Cooperating Teacher arrangement."[3] It would appear that greater frequency of supervision is perceived by student teachers as more effective supervision. While it seems questionable to equate the frequency of supervision with the quality of supervision, Stapleton[4], McElroy[5], and others have found similar results.

Responses to questions 1, 2, 6, 7, and 9 would seem to reflect the greater involvement of both the cooperating teachers and the Resident Supervisor in the TEC. This is expected in a teacher education center since one purpose in having a resident supervisor is to provide for the full-time commitment to the supervisory teaching process. Responses to questions 4 and 5 (C) would seem to indicate little difference in the role of school administrators in either of the two programs.

On the whole, the student teachers in the TEC would appear to exhibit somewhat more positive attitudes toward supervision than those students in the traditional program.

The results of the questionnaire distributed to the cooperating teachers at the conclusion of the Fall 1972 semester are summarized in Table 2. on page 13 . The responses to questions 1 and 2 are consistent with the total commitment to the TEC by the Resident Supervisor. Fischer also noted that

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[3] Fischer, loc. cit.

[4] Martin Luther Stapleton, "An Evaluation of Two Programs of Student Teacher Supervision by College Supervisors," (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1965.)

[5] Paul David McElroy, "The Effective and Ineffective Practices of the College Supervisor as Perceived by Secondary School Student Teachers Using The Critical Incident Technique," (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, John Hopkins University, 1972.)

Resident Supervisors seemed to bolster student teacher - cooperating teacher relationships. This closer working relationship would seem to be evident as well in the responses to questions 5, 6, 7, and 8. However, the response of the six TEC cooperating teachers to questions 10 (C) and 10 (D) is curious. Although all six had been invited to attend the weekly seminars only one chose to do so, and only three of the six responding felt that it would be appropriate to do so at least occasionally. Perhaps the overwhelmingly positive response to question 9 provides one possible answer: the cooperating teachers, despite the availability of the Resident Supervisor, did not have a clear set of role expectations.

Although the number of forms returned by the TEC cooperating teachers (43%) was less than hoped for, the positive quality of those responses, together with those returned by the student teachers, led to the belief that there existed a greater openness to the supervisory process in the TEC than in the traditional program.

On the basis of these results, it was decided to explore the problem of whether or not the greater openness to supervising in the TEC would lead to observably better performance in the classroom.

During the Spring 1973 semester four Hofstra University college supervisors who were not that semester engaged in the supervision of student teachers agreed to make classroom observations in both the TEC and traditional programs within their own certification fields; English, social studies, mathematics, and foreign languages. It was decided to select as many student teachers as possible from among the 29 assigned to the TEC with the constraint that there would be the same number of student teachers in each of the four fields.

Since there are only two student teachers in foreign languages in the TEC, two students were randomly selected from each of the remaining three fields for a total of eight student teachers in the TEC. For a comparison group, a similar number of students were selected from the traditional program with the constraint that the student teachers should be in schools reasonably similar to the TEC.

The next step involved the selection of an observation instrument which would be agreeable to all observers. All four observers were familiar with a number of classroom observation systems. However, no agreement could be reached on the applicability of any one observation system or rating scale. It was finally decided to develop an observation instrument sensitive, in at least some measure, to common concerns expressed by all four observers. This led to the development of the instrument described below which attempted to assess (1) the adequacy of the intended teaching behavior, and (2) the degree of congruence between the teacher's intended teaching behavior and his actual teaching behavior. The observation schedule also provided for additional explanatory comments by the observer to clarify his ratings or to enlarge upon some aspect of the rating scale.(See page 7 .)

The observers were expected to make their observations during the last two weeks of the semester. Two weeks prior to that period, the Coordinator of Secondary Student Teaching sent a letter informing the 16 student teachers that they had been randomly selected to participate in a study designed to test the applicability of an observation schedule to various disciplines. The student teachers were assured that their student teaching grades would in no way be affected by the observations. One week prior to the observation period, the observers contacted the student teachers to arrange time for a

ORSERVATION SCHEDULE

Part I Intended Teaching Behavior	low				high
(A) Statement of objectives	1	2	3	4	5
(B) Selection and organization of content	1	2	3	4	5
(C) Evaluation of objectives	1	2	3	4	5

Part II Actual Teaching Behavior					
(A) Social-emotional climate	1	2	3	4	5
(B) Questioning techniques	1	2	3	4	5
(C) Discussion skills	1	2	3	4	5
(D) Use of positive/negative reinforcement	1	2	3	4	5
(E) Overall congruence with intended teaching behavior	1	2	3	4	5

Part III Additional Comments

pre-observation conference in which to discuss the lesson plan, followed by the observation and a post-observation conference. Appointments were made with all 16 student teachers although four of the student teachers in the traditional program contacted the Coordinator to ask if the observations were required. (One of the four asked if it were "legal.") All of the observations were made as scheduled excpet that

1. After making the appointment but prior to the observation one student in the TEC became seriously ill and was absent for the remainder of the term. Thus, only seven of the student teachers in the TEC were observed.

2. Two student teachers in the traditional program had to be visited a second time since at the first visit each student showed a full-period film.

After all the observation reports were returned it was decided to compile the raw data by certification fields and by groups. The small number of subjects in the study together with the fact that the observation schedule was previously untested made further statistical analysis unwarranted.

Tables 3 and 4 on pages 15 and 16 show that raw scores from the observations, while Table 5 presents mean scores for the two groups. It was generally agreed by the observers that they could find no marked differences in the classroom teaching performance between the two groups.

In terms of the observer's written comments, all four observers noted that the student teachers in the TEC seemed, as one observer commented, "considerably more professional." While the term was not defined, it seemed to summarize the comments made in reference to the TEC student teachers:

> "Very open to suggestions. Nervous but under good control during the initial discussion, total control in class; in post-observation conference mature, eagor to learn, willing to argue."
>
> "The real difference seems to be in the sense of belonging which she manifests. She is a teacher, this is her school, these are her kids."

In contrast, the only comment in this respect made of a student teacher

in the traditional program was

> "Student seemed comfortable but not intimately part of the department although this is relative. Much more inclusion here than in other districts but in no way comparable to Plainedge."

The results of this extremely small scale study are clearly inconclusive; nevertheless, they indicate the necessity and feasibility for further study. If the function of supervisory teaching is the improvement of classroom teaching performance, and if student teachers working in teacher education centers exhibit more positive attitudes toward this supervisory teaching than do student teachers in traditional programs, then one is compelled to feel that something more than just "happiness" should accrue from this approach to teacher training. It may well be that openness to supervision does improve teaching performance but over a considerably longer period of time than a one semester student teaching experience. It may be necessary to follow these students through their first few years of teaching before any noticeable difference in teaching performance is evident.

There is in addition the difficulty of assessing teacher competency. Such currently used techniques as classroom observation, ratings by students, peers, and administrators, and pupil achievement tests all suffer from serious inadequacies. While McNeil and Popham[6] strongly urge the use of teacher performance tests and teacher contract plans, these tools, while highly promising, are far more difficult to employ at least at this time.

Despite the inadequacies of existing techniques and the difficulties involved in applying some of the newer approaches, such testing must continue and be expanded to include the effects of teacher education centers

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[6] John D. McNeil and W. James Popham, "The Assessment of Teacher Competence," Robert M.W. Travers, ed., Second Handbook of Research on Teaching, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1973).

on all participants. The teacher education center approach toward the improvement of teaching behavior at all professional levels is based on assumption that this is more effective than traditional student teaching programs and in-service courses for teachers. And yet this assumption need not be accepted blindly. This present study offers some support for the TEC approach, although clearly one hopes there will prove to be more to such centers than just a sense of greater satisfaction on the part of the participants.

Table 1. Selected responses from questionnaire distributed to all student teachers, mid-semester, Fall 1972.

Question		TEC N=11	Traditional N=77
1. How clearly did your cooperating teacher describe your duties and responsibilities as a student teacher?			
	a. very clearly	72.7 %	41.6 %
	b. clearly	18.2	20.8
	c. somewhat clearly	--	22.1
	d. not clearly	9.1	14.3
2. How clearly did your college supervisor describe your duties and responsibilities as a student teacher?			
	a. very clearly	81.8 %	53.2 %
	b. clearly	18.2	28.6
	c. somewhat clearly	--	15.6
	d. not clearly	--	2.6
3. To date, how many times have you been observed by your college supervisor?			
	a. once	--	40.3 %
	b. twice	--	58.4
	c. three or more times	100.0	1.3
4. To date, how many times have you been observed by the department chairman or other administrator in your school?			
	a. never	54.6%	48.1 %
	b. once	9.1	22.1
	c. twice or more	36.4	29.9
5. In terms of helping you to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of a certified teacher, how helpful are you finding the following:			
(A) cooperating teacher			
	a. extremely helpful	63.6 %	59.7 %
	b. helpful	36.4	22.1
	c. not particularly helpful	--	13.0
	d. of no help	--	2.6

Question	TEC	Traditional
(B) college supervisor		
a. extremely helpful	72.7 %	55.8 %
b. helpful	27.3	32.5
c. not particularly helpful	--	10.4
d. of no help	--	1.3
(C) school administrators		
a. extremely helpful	18.1 %	28.6 %
b. helpful	36.4	29.9
c. not particularly helpful	45.5	33.8
d. of no help	--	7.8
6. Do you feel that the co-requisite course (Interaction Analysis) has been of value in terms of improving your teaching?		
a. yes	100.0 %	42.9 %
b. no	--	57.1
7. Is your cooperating teacher aware of the objectives of the co-requisite course?		
a. yes	100.0 %	57.9 %
b. no	--	42.1
8. Has your cooperating teacher had occasion to assist you or participate with you in your work for the co-requisite course?		
a. yes	54.5 %	34.1 %
b. no	45.5	65.9
9. Has your college supervisor had occasion to assist you in the co-requisite course?		
a. yes	100.0 %	25.0 %
b. no	--	75.0

Table 2. Summary of cooperating teachers' responses at the conclusion of the Fall 1972 semester.

Question	TEC N=6	Traditional N=64
1. How were you selected as a cooperating teacher?		
a. you requested one	100.0 %	37.5 %
b. you were asked to accept one	--	48.4
c. you were assigned one	--	--
d. other	--	14.1
2. Did you meet the college supervisor prior to his first observation of your student teacher?		
a. yes	100.0 %	21.9 %
b. no	--	78.1
3. How many times did the college supervisor observe your student teacher during the semester?		
a. once	--	8.1 %
b. twice	--	37.1
c. three times	--	51.6
d. four times	50.0	3.2
e. five or more times	50.0	--
4. Do you feel that your student teacher was observed by the college suprevisor often enough?		
a. yes	100.0 %	72.1 %
b. no	--	27.9
5. Did you feel free to call upon the college supervisor to discuss your concerns regarding your student teacher?		
a. yes	100.0 %	80.6 %
b. no	--	19.3
6. During the semester did you initiate contact with the college supervisor to discuss concerns regarding your student teacher?		
a. yes	33.3 %	10.9 %
b. no	66.6	89.1
7. If you consulted with the college supervisor was the discussion fruitful?		
a. yes	100.0%	84.2 %
b. no	--	15.8

Question	TEC	Traditional
8. How much influence do you think the college supervisor had toward the professional growth of your student teacher?		
a. a great deal	66.6 %	28.8 %
b. some	33.3	44.1
c. very little	—	22.0
d. none	--	5.1
9. If the university were to offer a workshop on the role of the cooperating teacher would you attend?		
a. yes	100.0 %	68.9 %
b. no	--	31.1
10. Hofstra student teachers are required to attend a weekly seminar conducted by their college supervisors.		
(A) Are you aware of the objectives of this course?		
a. yes	100.0 %	65.0 %
b. no	--	35.0
(B) Have you ever been invited to attend the seminar?		
a. yes	100.0 %	22.0 %
b. no	--	88.0
(C) If you were invited did you ever attend?		
a. yes	16.7 %	100.0 %
b. no	83.3	--
(D) Do you think all cooperating teachers should attend these seminars at least occasionally?		
a. yes	50.0 %	84.2 %
b. no	50.0	15.8
11. Would you like to become more actively involved in the student teaching program?		
a. yes	100.0 %	66.0 %
b. no	--	34.0

Table 3. Raw scores on classroom observation schedule for student teachers in TEC, Spring 1973 semester

TEC

		English		Soc. St.		Math		For. Lang.	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8**
Part I	Intended Teaching Behavior								
	(A) Statement of Objectives	5	4	4	5	2	5	4	-
	(B) Selection and org. of content	5	3	4	5	3	5	4	-
	(C) Evaluation of objectives	5	2	4	4	4	4	4	-
Part II	Actual Teaching Behavior								
	(A) Social-emotional climate	5	5	5	5	3	3	5	-
	(B) Questioning techniques	3	5	4	5	3	3	2	-
	(C) Discussion skills	5	5	4	4	*	*	2	-
	(D) Use of pos/neg reinforcement	4	5	4	4	4	3	3	-
	(E) Overall congruence with intended teaching behavior	5	5	4	5	4	3	4	-

* not applicable
** student not available for observation

Table 4. Raw scores on classroom observation schedule for student teachers in the traditional program, Spring 1973.

Traditional Program

	English		Soc. St.		Math		For. Lang.	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
PartI Intended Teaching Behavior								
(A) Statement of objectives	4	4	4	3	2	2	2	5
(B) Selection and org. of content	4	4	3	3	4	5	1	5
(C) Evaluation of objectives	4	4	4	3	3	4	1	4
Part II Actual Teaching Behavior								
(A) Social-emotional climate	5	5	5	3	4	4	5	5
(B) Questioning techniques	4	4	4	4	3	3	1	4
(C) Discussion skills	4	4	4	3	*	*	1	4
(D) Use of pos/neg reinforcement	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	5
(E) Overall congruence with intended teaching behavior	5	5	4	3	4	4	2	5

* not applicable

Table 5. Mean scores on classroom observation schedule, Spring 1973 semester

		TEC N=7	Traditional N=8
Part I	Intended Teaching Behavior		
	a. Statement of objectives	4.14	3.25
	b. Selection and organization of content	4.14	3.63
	c. Evaluation of objectives	3.86	3.25
PartII	Actual Teaching Behavior		
	a. Social-emotional climate	4.43	4.63
	b. Questioning techniques	3.57	3.25
	c. Discussion skills	4.00	3.80
	d. Use of pos/neg reinforcement	3.86	4.25
	e. Overall congruence with intended teaching behavior	4.43	4.00

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